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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia/USSR

REPORT

SUBJECT New Strategic Railroad to Link Up
With Southern Trans-Siberian

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PLACE ACQUIRED
(BY SOURCE)DATE ACQUIRED
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DATE (OF INFO.)

25X1A

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DATE DISTR. 23 Feb 1954

NO. OF PAGES 2

NO. OF ENCLS.

SUPP. TO
REPORT NO.

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1. On 10 Dec 53, General Kratochvil authorized the command of the Fourth Military District at Košice to place military units in the district at the disposal of the civilian authorities in charge of the construction of the new railroad line from Slovakia to Soviet Russia called the Trať družby. After having driven through the 12 km Bujanov tunnel the civilian authorities encountered difficulties in the winding valley of the River Hornád, and the project has been seriously delayed.
2. On 8 Dec 53 General Artemov, of the Soviet Military Mission, informed the Czechoslovak Government that it would be necessary to speed up the new line. This line is linked with the construction of the new South-Trans-Siberian line, now being built on the 1550 km stretch between Abakan and Akmolinsk, and will be completed by construction of the Čardžu-Kungrad-Makat line. It was originally intended to complete the line in 1956, but on the insistence of the Soviet general staff, the date has been stepped up to 1955.
3. A new Central Asian Command has charge of the work. This command is in charge of the defense of the Urals, the Caucasus, the Kuznetsov Basin and especially the new Volga-Don Canal, and is the base for all Soviet operations in the Middle East, and the railroad is of obvious importance to it.
4. The new line will be connected through Kharkov and Kiev with Central Europe and the Balkans. As the Trať družby line connects not only Prague, Brno and Bratislava to this line, but also the industrial districts of Moravská Ostrava and Pilsen Soviet authorities are putting pressure on the Czechoslovaks

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Approved For Release 1999/09/23 : CIA-RDP81-01036R000100110070-2

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to finish the work much earlier than planned.

5. The syndicalist organizations have objected vigorously to the employment of soldiers on the new line, considering it an antilabor step.
6. Members of the Czechoslovak general staff consider the haste displayed in pushing through these new railroad lines as an indication of the reactivation of Soviet strategy, which was visibly held back by Stalin's death. The strategy aims at the achievement of Soviet military supremacy in 1954, or 1955 at latest, and is oriented toward the Middle East, now considered the weakest point in Western military dispositions.

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